

*Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge***Unauthorized Cattle on Two Islands***Frequently Asked Questions*

Both Wosnesenski and Chirikof islands, located in remote Southwest Alaska, are uninhabited and part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge was established in 1980 to conserve marine mammals, seabirds and other migratory birds, and the marine resources upon which they rely. Wosnesenski and Chirikof islands have sustained damage to wildlife habitat, native vegetation, and archaeological sites from grazing by unauthorized cattle left behind when ranchers left the islands years ago.

**Q: Who owns the land?**

Both Wosnesenski Island (7500 acres) and Chirikof Island (29,000 acres) are federal lands designated as part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge has an explicit legal directive to manage the islands to benefit native fish and wildlife species.

Q: What wildlife will benefit once the unauthorized cattle use has stopped?

While we can't know for sure what will happen in the future, we expect that burrow nesting and grassland nesting

Q: Where did the cattle come from?

Both Wosnesenski and Chirikof Islands formerly had people living on the island who brought cattle for milk, meat, and/or commercial use. When people quit living on the islands, the cattle were left behind. For a time, the federal government granted permits authorizing continued grazing of livestock but no permits have been issued and no grazing fees have been paid on either island for many years.

Q: How many cattle are there?

Nobody knows for sure. Our best estimate is somewhere around 750 cattle on Chirikof Island and less than 200 cattle on Wosnesenski Island but those numbers are based on surveys done several years ago; the actual cattle population could be higher or lower.

Q: Has the Service removed cattle from refuge islands in the past?

Yes, cattle have been removed from three refuge islands. One example is Simeonof Island, where wildlife habitat improved following cattle removal.

Q: Wasn't this project attempted before? We previously authorized a private party to remove cattle from

Q: Will there be an opportunity to move cattle to other islands to preserve genetic material or meat supplies?

The Service is considering options to allow people to remove cattle or cattle products for any desired purposes. No final decision has been made yet.

Q: Why is the Service moving forward on this project now?

Why is it a priority? Wildlife habitat restoration is always our priority on National Wildlife Refuges. Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge has a long history of eliminating non-native species from islands to successfully improve wildlife habitat.



Damage to Refuge resources by Cattle/ USFWS

Q: How is the Government going to pay for this project when federal budgets are declining?

We do not envision expensive

birds such as various waterfowl, seabirds, and songbirds should benefit. We know that the surrounding marine environment is highly productive and capable of supporting abundant wildlife. The nearby Semidi Islands, with no cattle present, support huge numbers of seabirds.

Q If cattle are killed, will the meat be salvaged? Opportunities for meat salvage are being considered. No decisions have been made.

Q: Has a land exchange been considered? No formal proposals for a land exchange have been received by the Service in recent years. If a proposal is presented, we will consider it on its merits.

Q: Why can't the Service change the purposes of the Refuge to include cattle so they must stay on the islands? The purposes for which the Refuge was established were determined by Congress and only Congress can change these purpose to include cattle.



Bull on Chirikof Island/USFWS

Chirikof Island but that project was unsuccessful. The current proposal includes much more public involvement and should help us reach a comprehensive decision about the future of the cattle.

Q: Has the Service been involved in other restoration projects similar to this one? Were they successful? The Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge has eradicated non-native mammals from over 1 million acres of refuge islands, with documented and published success. Rats, foxes, rabbits, reindeer, and cattle are among the species which have been eliminated from islands where they don't belong.

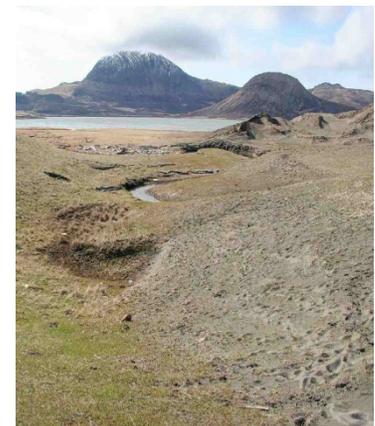
Q: Can the Service grant grazing permits to allow the cattle to stay as part of a managed grazing program? We will consider a managed grazing program in our planning. We are prohibited from allowing grazing to continue unless it is found to be compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established.

government contracts for cattle removal. Removal of live cattle or cattle products, if it occurs, would not be at government expense. Planning for this project will be done by existing Service staff.

Q: How can I get involved in the process or get on the mailing list? You can contact the Refuge Headquarters

Email: fw7_akmaritime@fws.gov
Letter: Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge; Attention: Cattle, 95 Sterling Hwy, Suite 1, Homer, AK 99603
Phone: 907-235-6546, or **Fax:** 907-235-7783

You can also check the status of this project online at <http://www.fws.gov/alaska/nwr/akmar/grazing.htm>



Grazing impacts on Wosnesenski Island/USFWS